



SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA 94143

December 9, 1974

Dr. Robin Weiss
c/o Dr. Robert Gallo
National Cancer Institute
Bethesda, Maryland 20014

Dear Robin:

I was surprised to learn from your recent letter that you feel I have sinned against you in the matter of RPL-12. Although I can understand from your letter that this virus means a great deal to you, I hope you will believe that from our point of view it was simply one of a very large number of viruses and cell types which Peter had sent to us for testing with Dominique's "sarcoma-gene specific" probe. We had no idea of the politics and priorities involved; if Peter erred in sending the virus to us without discussing it with you or Graham Purchase, that is a matter for you to work out with him. I am sorry if you think I was being secretive about our work with RPL-12 in the 30 seconds we chatted in Florence. I was not. There would have been little or nothing to say---we have still done no more than show that at least 10 per cent of the final transforming stock consists of virus with transformation genes ---and it did not occur to me that there could be anything wrong with our having the virus to test.

Those of us involved with the sarcoma-gene project (Dominique, Mike, Peter, and I) are content to leave with you the decision as to what we should do at this point with RPL-12. Some weeks ago Peter sent us an "early" stock of the virus, but we have not yet prepared sufficient quantities for testing. We could (1) drop the whole business; (2) send you our limited data to date for use in the manuscript you are now preparing; and/or (3) analyze any stocks, cells, or tumors you wished to send us. It might be useful if you could call us from Bethesda to discuss this matter, so we can know what to do with the stocks Peter has sent. In any case, we will certainly not publish anything about RPL-12 without your consent or co-authorship.

I feel obligated to respond to your remarks about the duck cell business. Since I took care to acknowledge your idea in several papers and public appearances, I hardly think I demonstrated a lack of gratitude for what has proved to be a very good suggestion. There never has been, however, any real need for "collaboration" in the usual sense in the development of this system. In the early days, Peter sent us a couple of dozen duck eggs, but we soon found a local source and have subsequently done whatever biology was necessary in our own lab. The inclusion of Peter as co-author on several manuscripts reflects his help in several areas---development of transformed mammalian cell lines, provision of many virus stocks, frequent discussion of research plans, etc.; it would be very unfair to assume that he usurped some role which was rightfully yours.

I certainly regret anything I may have done, wittingly or unwittingly, to cause us to correspond about these morose subjects. Despite them, I (and my colleagues) send you our best personal regards.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Harold". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first letter being a large capital 'H'.

Harold E. Varmus, M.D.
Associate Professor
Department of Microbiology

HEV/es